



# Budget



# MAGIC

THE GATHERING

# for Beginners



# 2020

Todd W. Neller











# Central Questions

- I personally avoided Magic: The Gathering (and all trading card games) for its first 25 years as a perceived “money pit” with a “pay to win” aspect. Two focus questions:
  - What changed my **perceptions** of MTG?
  - Through my learning experiences, what do I recommend as the **highest value purchases** and **best resources for the beginner**?

# The Perception: Standard Format

## Standard Metagame




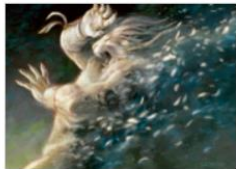




Showing most popular decks from the last 14 Days

 <p><b>Sultai Control</b> Uro, Titan of Nature's Wrath Thought Erasure Nissa, Who Shakes the</p> <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Decks</th><th>Meta %</th><th>Price</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>594</td><td>18.57%</td><td>\$ 571</td></tr></tbody></table>	Decks	Meta %	Price	594	18.57%	\$ 571	 <p><b>Sultai Ramp</b> Casualties of War Uro, Titan of Nature's Wrath Narset, Parter of Veils</p> <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Decks</th><th>Meta %</th><th>Price</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>538</td><td>16.82%</td><td>\$ 534</td></tr></tbody></table>	Decks	Meta %	Price	538	16.82%	\$ 534	 <p><b>Temur Adventures</b> Edgwall Innkeeper Lucky Clover Lovestruck Beast</p> <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Decks</th><th>Meta %</th><th>Price</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>224</td><td>7.00%</td><td>\$ 292</td></tr></tbody></table>	Decks	Meta %	Price	224	7.00%	\$ 292	 <p><b>Mono-Green Sto...</b> Pelt Collector Stonecoil Serpent Barkhide Troll</p> <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Decks</th><th>Meta %</th><th>Price</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>220</td><td>6.88%</td><td>\$ 199</td></tr></tbody></table>	Decks	Meta %	Price	220	6.88%	\$ 199
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# The Perception: Modern Format

## Modern Metagame









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 <p><b>Uro Piles</b> Uro, Titan of Nature's Wrath Growth Spiral Path to Exile</p> <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Decks</th><th>Meta %</th><th>Price</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>39</td><td>10.24%</td><td>\$ 1,218</td></tr></tbody></table>	Decks	Meta %	Price	39	10.24%	\$ 1,218	 <p><b>Blitz</b> Manamorphose Monastery Swiftspear Soul-Scar Mage</p> <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Decks</th><th>Meta %</th><th>Price</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>26</td><td>6.82%</td><td>\$ 334</td></tr></tbody></table>	Decks	Meta %	Price	26	6.82%	\$ 334	 <p><b>Gruul Midrange</b> Lightning Bolt Seasoned Pyromancer Arbor Elf</p> <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Decks</th><th>Meta %</th><th>Price</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>21</td><td>5.51%</td><td>\$ 599</td></tr></tbody></table>	Decks	Meta %	Price	21	5.51%	\$ 599	 <p><b>Azorius Control</b> Path to Exile Opt Stoneforge Mystic</p> <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Decks</th><th>Meta %</th><th>Price</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>20</td><td>5.25%</td><td>\$ 1,064</td></tr></tbody></table>	Decks	Meta %	Price	20	5.25%	\$ 1,064
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## Commander Metagame


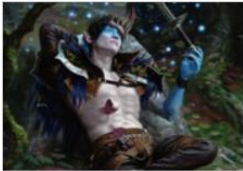






Showing most popular decks from the last 14 Days

 <p><b>Atraxa, Praetors' ...</b>            Atraxa, Praetors' Voice            Sol Ring            Evolution Sage</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Decks</th> <th>Meta %</th> <th>Price</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>104</td> <td>1.65%</td> <td>\$ 918</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Decks	Meta %	Price	104	1.65%	\$ 918	 <p><b>Golos, Tireless Pil...</b>            Golos, Tireless Pilgrim            Sol Ring            Cultivate</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Decks</th> <th>Meta %</th> <th>Price</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>90</td> <td>1.43%</td> <td>\$ 1,095</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Decks	Meta %	Price	90	1.43%	\$ 1,095	 <p><b>Kenrith, the Retur...</b>            Kenrith, the Returned King            Sol Ring            Biomancer's Familiar</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Decks</th> <th>Meta %</th> <th>Price</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>82</td> <td>1.30%</td> <td>\$ 1,016</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Decks	Meta %	Price	82	1.30%	\$ 1,016	 <p><b>Sisay, Weatherlig...</b>            Sisay, Weatherlight Captain            Primevals' Glorious Rebirth            Sol Ring</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Decks</th> <th>Meta %</th> <th>Price</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>79</td> <td>1.25%</td> <td>\$ 1,050</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Decks	Meta %	Price	79	1.25%	\$ 1,050
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# The Perception: Legacy Format

## Legacy Metagame









Showing most popular decks from the last 14 Days

Deck Name	Decks	Meta %	Price
 <b>Temur Delver</b> Delver of Secrets Brainstorm Force of Will	40	13.79%	\$ 4,136
 <b>Snowko</b> Oko, Thief of Crowns Arcum's Astrolabe Brainstorm	23	7.93%	\$ 3,152
 <b>Elves</b> Elvish Visionary Glimpse of Nature Green Sun's Zenith	17	5.86%	\$ 4,470
 <b>Hogaak</b> Bloodghast Hogaak, Arisen Necropolis Bridge from Below	13	4.48%	\$ 3,374
 <b>Lands</b> Life from the Loam Crop Rotation Mox Diamond	12	4.14%	\$ 5,721
 <b>Dark Depths</b> Dark Depths Crop Rotation Lotus Petal	11	3.79%	\$ 2,369
 <b>Mono-Green Clou...</b> Primeval Titan Thought-Knot Seer Grim Monolith	9	3.10%	\$ 2,499
 <b>Eldrazi Stompy</b> Chalice of the Void Thought-Knot Seer Reality Smasher	9	3.10%	\$ 1,275

# The Perception: Vintage Format

## Vintage Metagame

Showing most popular decks from the last 14 Days ▾

 <p><b>Underworld Breach</b> Underworld Breach Force of Will Preordain</p> <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Decks</th><th>Meta %</th><th>Price</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>14</td><td>13.33%</td><td>\$ 30,278</td></tr></tbody></table>	Decks	Meta %	Price	14	13.33%	\$ 30,278	 <p><b>Doomsday</b> Doomsday Force of Will Preordain</p> <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Decks</th><th>Meta %</th><th>Price</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>14</td><td>13.33%</td><td>\$ 31,569</td></tr></tbody></table>	Decks	Meta %	Price	14	13.33%	\$ 31,569	 <p><b>Paradoxical Outco...</b> Paradoxical Outcome Force of Will Mox Opal</p> <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Decks</th><th>Meta %</th><th>Price</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>11</td><td>10.48%</td><td>\$ 36,660</td></tr></tbody></table>	Decks	Meta %	Price	11	10.48%	\$ 36,660	 <p><b>Hogaak Vine</b> Hogaak, Arisen Necropolis Once Upon a Time Basking Rootwalla</p> <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Decks</th><th>Meta %</th><th>Price</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>10</td><td>9.52%</td><td>\$ 27,305</td></tr></tbody></table>	Decks	Meta %	Price	10	9.52%	\$ 27,305
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# The Perception: *Expensive!!!*









- Average cost of top 8 popular decks on 8/26/2020 by format:
  - Standard: \$345
  - Modern: \$681
  - Commander: \$904
  - Legacy: \$3,375
  - Vintage: \$33,552
- “[Magic: The Gathering: Twenty Years, Twenty Lessons Learned](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QHHg99hwQGY)” (head designer Mark Rosewater, GDC 2016; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QHHg99hwQGY>)
  - Lesson 18: **Restrictions Breed Creativity**
  - So what’s an easy, restrictive M:TG game format that is **low-budget** and “breeds creativity?”



# One Solution: Pauper Format

## Pauper Metagame

Showing most popular decks from the last 14 Days

 <p><b>Skred Faeries</b>            Counterspell            Skred            Ninja of the Deep Hours</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Decks</th> <th>Meta %</th> <th>Price</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>19</td> <td>12.84%</td> <td>\$ 74</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Decks	Meta %	Price	19	12.84%	\$ 74	 <p><b>Tron</b>            Mulldrifter            Prophetic Prism            Impulse</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Decks</th> <th>Meta %</th> <th>Price</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>13</td> <td>8.78%</td> <td>\$ 55</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Decks	Meta %	Price	13	8.78%	\$ 55	 <p><b>Mono-Green Sto...</b>            Savage Swipe            Rancor            Hunger of the Howpack</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Decks</th> <th>Meta %</th> <th>Price</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>12</td> <td>8.11%</td> <td>\$ 36</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Decks	Meta %	Price	12	8.11%	\$ 36	 <p><b>Mardu Monarch</b>            Palace Sentinels            Kor Skyfisher            Galvanic Blast</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Decks</th> <th>Meta %</th> <th>Price</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>11</td> <td>7.43%</td> <td>\$ 41</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Decks	Meta %	Price	11	7.43%	\$ 41
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  - Commander: \$904
  - Legacy: \$3,375
  - Vintage: \$33,552
  - **Pauper: \$49**
- So there's a common format that isn't super expensive, but it's still a lot to pay for a beginner that doesn't know whether or not they'll like the game. (i.e. "barrier to entry")
- Let's start at the beginning... **how to start learning MTG for free.**



My Quick Reference Online: <https://tinyurl.com/mtg-beginner>

# Wizards of the Coast Videos

- Wizards of the Coast (WotC), the company that creates MTG, has simple introductory videos:
  - [What is Magic: The Gathering?](#)
  - [How to Play Magic: The Gathering](#)
  - [How to Build Your First Magic Deck](#)
  - [Ways to Play Magic: The Gathering](#)



# MAGIC THE GATHERING ARENA BETA

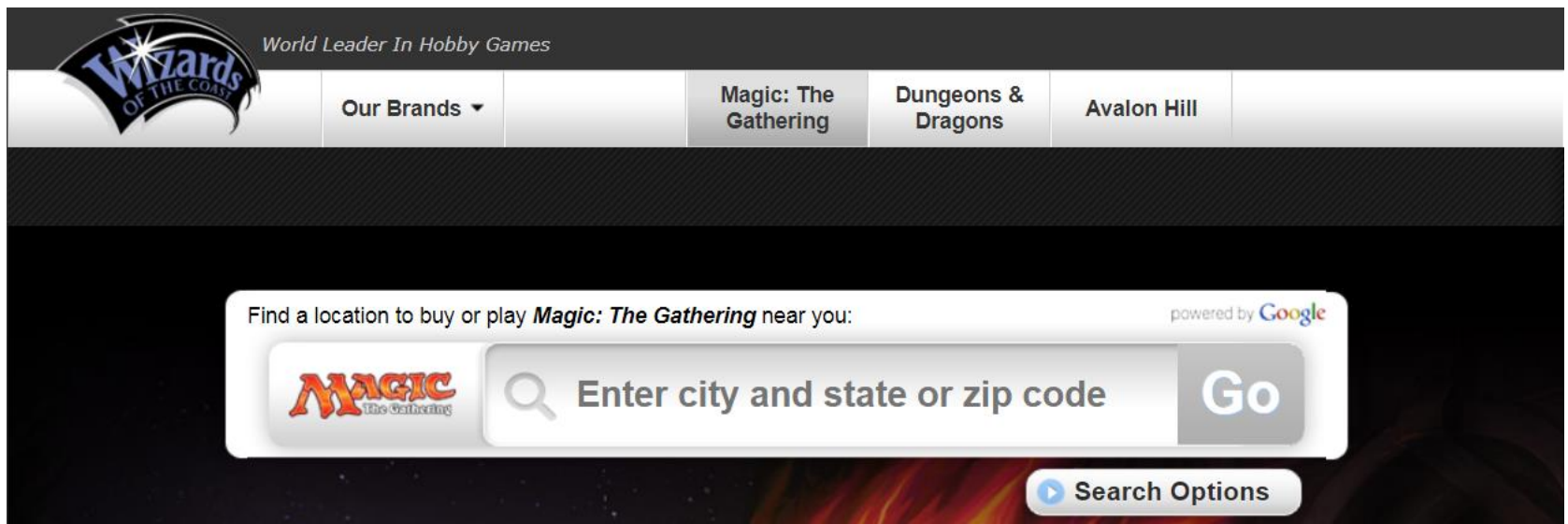


# Magic: The Gathering Arena

- Play tutorial games free on Magic: The Gathering Arena:  
<https://magic.wizards.com/en/mtgarena>
  - Really free to play – rather than pay, can *play* to earn wildcards to trade in for cards to **build tier 1 standard decks**
  - Good, clear interface
  - Generous good, **free starter decks** awarded to regular players

# First Budget Purchase: MTG Arena Starter Kit

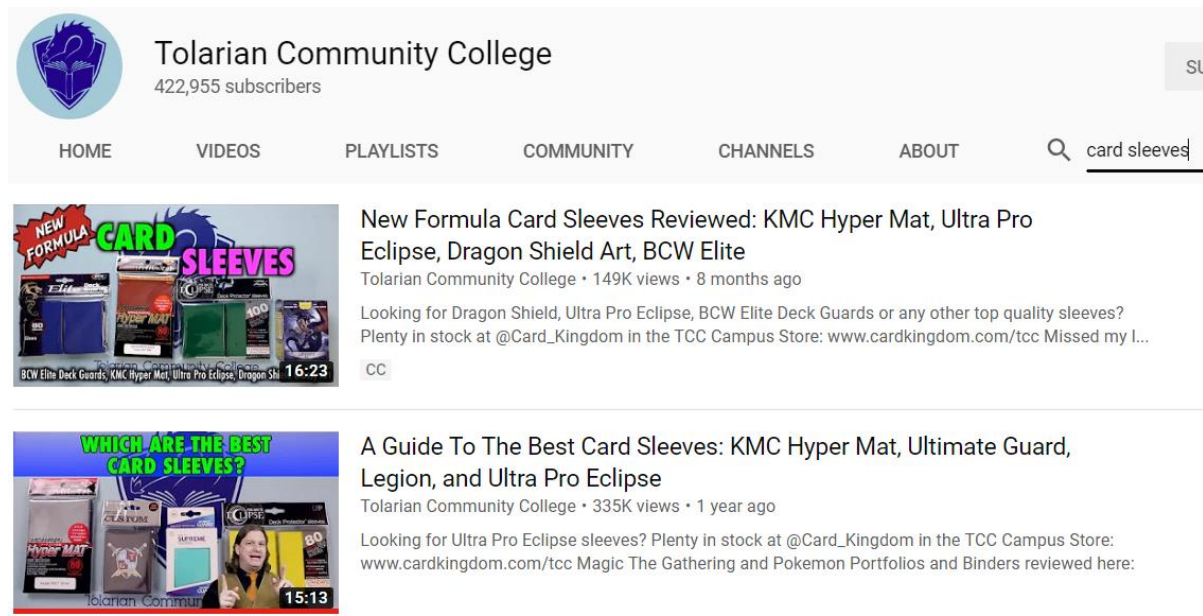
- Find your local game stores using <http://locator.wizards.com/>
- Purchase an MTG Arena Starter Kit for ~\$10
  - Includes two decks (paper & digital) and rules
- Learn on paper and MTG Arena



The screenshot shows the top navigation bar of the Wizards of the Coast website. On the left is the logo for "Wizards of the Coast" with the tagline "World Leader In Hobby Games". To the right of the logo are navigation links for "Our Brands", "Magic: The Gathering", "Dungeons & Dragons", and "Avalon Hill". Below the navigation bar is a search bar with the text "Find a location to buy or play *Magic: The Gathering* near you:" and "powered by Google". The search bar contains the "MAGIC The Gathering" logo, a magnifying glass icon, the text "Enter city and state or zip code", and a "Go" button. Below the search bar is a "Search Options" button.

# Want to Protect Your Cards?

- Buy a practical accessory while you're there: *card sleeves* to protect and preserve your cards.
  - Good brands:
    - [UltraPro Eclipse](#)
    - [Dragon Shield](#)
    - See [Tolarian Community College videos](#) for reviews and recommendations for accessories.



The screenshot shows the YouTube channel page for Tolarian Community College, which has 422,955 subscribers. The search bar contains the text "card sleeves". Two video thumbnails are visible:

- Video 1:** "New Formula Card Sleeves Reviewed: KMC Hyper Mat, Ultra Pro Eclipse, Dragon Shield Art, BCW Elite". The thumbnail shows various card sleeve products. The video duration is 16:23. The description includes: "Tolarian Community College • 149K views • 8 months ago" and "Looking for Dragon Shield, Ultra Pro Eclipse, BCW Elite Deck Guards or any other top quality sleeves? Plenty in stock at @Card\_Kingdom in the TCC Campus Store: www.cardkingdom.com/tcc Missed my L...".
- Video 2:** "A Guide To The Best Card Sleeves: KMC Hyper Mat, Ultimate Guard, Legion, and Ultra Pro Eclipse". The thumbnail shows a person reviewing products. The video duration is 15:13. The description includes: "Tolarian Community College • 335K views • 1 year ago" and "Looking for Ultra Pro Eclipse sleeves? Plenty in stock at @Card\_Kingdom in the TCC Campus Store: www.cardkingdom.com/tcc Magic The Gathering and Pokemon Portfolios and Binders reviewed here:".

# Budget Accessories

- For keeping track of life totals:
  - Free Talisman Games Magic Life Total app:  
<https://talisman.games/products/magic-life-total/>
- +1/+1 or -1/-1 counters: [small \(12mm\) d6 dice](#)
- [13.5" x 24" black playmat](#) (~\$10)
- [Deckboxes](#) (< \$2 each)



# Budget Format: Pauper

- MTG booster packs generally contain cards of varying rarity, e.g.
  - 1 rare card (or possibly a rare “mythic” rare)
  - 3 uncommon cards
  - 10 common cards
  - 1 token creature
- Often, desirable cards for competitive play are more rare, causing high prices given low supply and high demand.
- **Pauper format:** Only cards mass-produced at **common** rarity at any point in MTG history are allowed (with the exception of a [short banlist](#)).
- Purchase cards individually online, e.g. via [TCGplayer.com](http://TCGplayer.com)
- Advantage: the same joys and challenges of creative deck building with a restriction that lowers the price
- Disadvantage: the same disadvantage shared by all constructed formats...

# “Banned and Restricted”

- When WotC sees a card/deck that is getting too much play, they address the problem by strategically banning/restricting play of card(s).
- Whether Legacy or Pauper, one’s favorite deck can be nerfed overnight. This is becoming more common in recent years.
- What if *you* could decide which cards could be played in your playgroup...



# Budget Format: Cube

- A playgroup builds a balanced set of 360+ cards that support many archetypes (e.g. styles/themes) of play.
- Highlander format (“There can be only one.”) – often, at most one card of each type is permitted
- Any draft format is permitted, e.g.
  - Form 15-card “booster packs” and traditional draft.
  - Construct a limited 40-card deck from a set of 90 random cards.
- Include about 35 basic lands in each color for deck building for 8 players.
- My guide to MTG cube resources:  
<https://tinyurl.com/mtg-cube-resources>

# Example: Card Kingdom Starter Cube

## Card Kingdom Starter Cube



Nothing is more fun than drafting a Cube, but building a Cube can be hard and expensive. That's why we created the Card Kingdom Starter Cube! This Cube contains 360 cards (excluding basic lands) and was created with one thing in mind: FUN! Our Cube is filled with fun draft archetypes and exciting bombs to get you started on your own personal Cube. Use this as your base, and add or swap cards as you see fit!

*Includes 35 of each basic land and comes in two custom Card Kingdom Blue boxes with enough **Black Ultra Pro Gloss Sleeves** for the whole kit!*

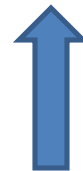
*All cards included are NM/EX condition.*

**Current Cube List**

\$99.99

Sorry, one or more styles of this item are out of stock.

🔄 Restock Notice



Note: Different versions are created in bulk and periodically sell out until the next version is created. It's worth the wait!

# Latest Card Kingdom Starter Cube List: <https://cubecobra.com/cube/list/9t9>

Card Kingdom Starter Cube 2.3 (360 Card Legacy Cube)

Overview

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White (54)	Blue (54)	Black (54)	Red (54)	Green (54)	Multicolored (40)	Colorless (26)	Lands (24)
<b>Creature (31)</b>	<b>Creature (24)</b>	<b>Creature (31)</b>	<b>Creature (26)</b>	<b>Creature (35)</b>	<b>Azorius (4)</b>	<b>Creature (8)</b>	<b>Azorius (2)</b>
Doomed Traveler	Augur of Bolas	Grasping Scoundrel	Fanatical Firebrand	Avacyn's Pilgrim	Momentary Blink	Gingerbrute	Azorius Guildgate
Gideon's Lawkeeper	Elusive Spellfist	Grim Physician	Ghitu Lavarunner	Chainweb Aracnir	Turn to Mist	Crashing Drawbridge	Tranquil Cove
Hunted Witness	Hypnotic Sprite	Pilfering Imp	Goblin Motivator	Llanowar Elves	Elite Guardmage	Lesser Masticore	<b>Dimir (2)</b>
Loyal Sentry	Mystic Archaeologist	Discordant Piper	Jackal Pup	Oviya Pashiri, Sage Life...	Lavinia of the Tenth	Sorcerer's Broom	Dimir Guildgate
Soldier of the Pantheon	Passwall Adept	Doomed Dissenter	Blood Aspirant	Sedge Scorpion	<b>Dimir (4)</b>	Pilgrim's Eye	Dismal Backwater
Toolcraft Exemplar	Sigiled Starfish	Lampad of Death's Vigil	Burning Prophet	Deathcap Cultivator	Atris, Oracle of Half-Tru...	Skyscanner	<b>Rakdos (2)</b>
Aethergeode Miner	Sky Theater Strix	Miasmim Mummy	Careless Celebrant	Ilysian Caryatid	Silumgar's Command	Akroan Horse	Bloodfell Caves
Arashin Cleric	Stinging Lionfish	Mire Triton	Dark-Dweller Oracle	Kronch Wrangler	Lochmere Serpent	Meteor Golem	Rakdos Guildgate
Azorius Arrester	Alirios, Enraptured	Order of Midnight	Kari Zev, Skyship Raider	Nessian Hornbeetle	Rags // Riches	<b>Artifact (18)</b>	<b>Gruul (2)</b>
Countless Gears Reneg...	Cloudkin Seer	Ravenous Rats	Kiln Fiend	Resilient Khenra	<b>Rakdos (4)</b>	Scrabbling Claws	Gruul Guildgate
Gearshift Ace	Frost Lynx	Reassembling Skeleton	Rimrock Knight	Satyr Wayfinder	Fireblade Artist	Soul-Guide Lantern	Rugged Highlands
Glory-Bound Initiate	Jhessian Thief	Scrapheap Scrounger	Speedway Fanatic	Snarespinner	Slaughter-Priest of Mo...	Amorphous Axe	<b>Selesnya (2)</b>
Impassioned Orator	Man-o'-War	Crow of Dark Tidings	Underworld Rage-Hou...	Whisperer of the Wilds	Tymaret, the Murder Ki...	Captain's Claws	Blossoming Sands
Impostor of the Sixth P...	Naiad of Hidden Coves	Crypt Rats	Ahn-Crop Invader	Woodland Champion	Brawl-Bash Ogre	Fleetfeather Sandals	Selesnya Guildgate
Leonin of the Lost Pride	Wavebreak Hippocamp	Gorging Vulture	Anax, Hardened in the ...	Boon Satyr	<b>Gruul (4)</b>	Heart-Piercer Bow	<b>Orzhov (2)</b>
Stormfront Pegasus	Archaeomancer	Nantuko Husk	Bogardan Dragonheart	Ghirapur Guide	Gallia of the Endless D...	Key to the City	Orzhov Guildgate
Attended Knight	Mist Raven	Necromancer's Assistant	Dreamstalker Manticore	Golgari Brownscale	Warden of the Chained	Sky Skiff	Scoured Barrens
Eidolon of Inspiration	Niblis of Frost	Nighthowler	Smelt-Ward Minotaur	Loathsome Chimera	Samut, Tyrant Smasher	Wings of Hubris	<b>Golgari (2)</b>
Forbidding Spirit	Guardian of Tazeem	Phyrexian Ghoul	Stampede Rider	Thrashing Brontodon	Thrash // Threat	Aethersphere Harvester	Golgari Guildgate
Master Trinketeer	Mnemonic Wall	Warteye Witch	Weaver of Lightning	Wild Beastmaster	<b>Selesnya (4)</b>	Cultivator's Caravan	
Roc Egg	Aethersnipe	Graveshifter	Akoum Firebird	Arasta of the Endless ...		Fountain of Ichor	
Solemn Recruit	Sage-Eye Avengers	Mindwrack Demon	Arena Trickster	Deadbridge Goliath			

# Artisan/Peasant Doubleton Set Cube

(MTG Arena C/U)

(All C/U)

(2x copies)

- Sets, released every few months, are designed around commons and uncommons, since they're 93% of the cards opened in booster packs.
- 2 copies of each booster common and uncommon in a set often create a *great budget cube experience*. Example: [M21 Artisan Doubleton Cube](#)
- Lots with 4x commons and uncommons often sell for ~\$50, so think of these as 2x ~\$25 small cubes!
- Adding about 35 copies of each basic land (~2.5 cents each in bulk) plus bulk penny sleeves adds ~\$10.



mtgmintcard

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mtgmintcard.com / Magic The Gathering / Card Lot / Core Set 2021 / English / Complete Set - 4x Core Set 2021 M21 Common & Uncommon

### Complete Set - 4x Core Set 2021 M21 Common & Uncommon

Price : ~~\$64.99~~ **\$49.49**  
You saved 10% (\$5.5)  
Free Ship: Zone 1

1 Watch Add to Cart


**Description**  
Core Set 2021 M21 Uncommon and Common Set x4  
Including:  
Uncommon Set X4  
Common Set X4  
Basic Land will NOT be included  
Borderless Frames / Extended-Art  
Frames / Showcase Frames will NOT be included

We will start to ship this item on 3rd July 2020

Item Weight 1500.00g



Magic 2021 (M21) 4x  
Common/Uncommon Set (MTG)  
[All Magic: the Gathering Lots](#)  
Out of Stock

Seller	Condition	Quantity	Price
	Complete Set	0	\$44.95

# M21 Artisan Doubleton Cube

M21 Artisan Doubleton Cube (382 Card Peasant Budget Set Cube)

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## M21 Artisan Doubleton Cube

0 followers

Cube ID m21-artisan-doubleton



382 Card Peasant Budget Set Cube

Designed by [tneller](#) • [RSS](#)

Owned

\$37

Buy

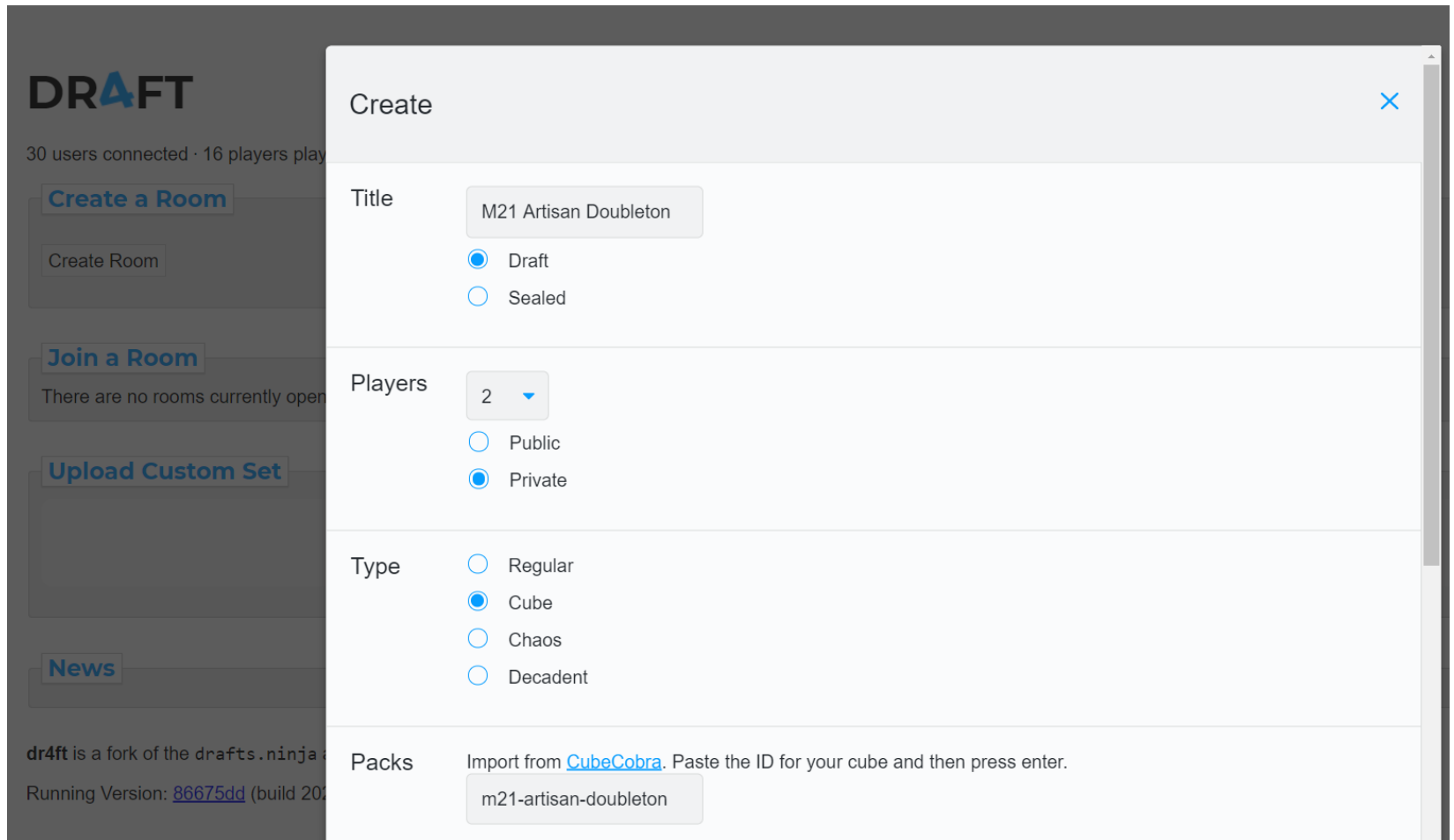
\$33

### Description

This is an M21 artisan doubleton set cube, suitable for (1) **easy collection and play in MTG Arena**, and (2) **relatively inexpensive purchase in paper**.

In MTG Arena, completion of daily quests and 4x wins per day earns enough gold to quick draft 2x of all commons and uncommons for 5000 gold/draft in a reasonably short period of time.

# Online: Draft on [dr4ft.info](https://dr4ft.info)



Play drafted decks on MTG Arena, [untap.in](https://untap.in), [Cockatrice](https://Cockatrice), etc.



# Budget MTG Summary

- Try for free: [MTG Arena](#)
- Learn with a friend: [MTG Arena Starter Kit](#)
- Learn a lot about MTG through cube drafting for as low as \$12.50 per person in a playgroup of 8 with a [CK Starter Cube](#).
- Enjoy an MTG set design with an [Artisan/Peasant Doubleton Set Cube](#)
- Continue to learn online through [MTG Arena](#) play and many free [YouTube](#) and [Twitch](#) videos.

# Addendum

- Gettysburg College Game Club

Recommendations:

- [The Commander's Quarters](#): Build 100-card commander format decks around your commander card for \$25.
- [Budget MTG Decks](#): Build decks in a variety of formats with all non-commander cards < \$1.